United Nations A/C.5/54/SR.61

General Assembly
Fifty-fourth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
6 July 2000

Original: English

Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 61st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 9 May 2000, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Ms. Wensley ..... (Australia)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

Contents

Agenda item 128: Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping forces in the Middle East (*continued*)

(a) United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (*continued*)

(b) United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (*continued*)

Agenda item 133: Financing of the United Nations Protection Force, the United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia, the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force and the United Nations Peace Forces headquarters (*continued*)

Agenda item 121: Programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (*continued*)

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/54/L.83/Rev. 1 concerning agenda items 49 (b) and 121

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

00-42318 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 128: Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping forces in the Middle East (*continued*)

(a) United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (*continued*) (A/54/707 and Corr.1, A/54/732 and A/54/841 and Add.1)

(b) United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (*continued*) (A/54/708, A/54/724 and A/54/841 and Add.2)

1. **Mr. Diab** (Lebanon), speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, expressed his profound regret and dismay at Israel's failure, despite the repeated efforts of the Secretary-General, to comply with General Assembly resolution 53/227, pursuant to which it was required to pay the amount of $1,284,633 resulting from the incident at Qana on 18 April 1996. As it was essential to avoid setting any precedent, Israel should be made to bear the consequences of its deliberate attack, in which 102 civilians had been killed. He therefore urged renewed adoption of the resolution holding Israel responsible for the costs resulting from the Qana incident and also requested the Secretary-General to take strict additional measures to ensure Israel's compliance with the resolution. The current report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (A/54/724) departed from the previous reports in that it omitted to state the details of those costs. It was vital, however, to attach the necessary importance to such details by continuing to list them under a separate item of the report.

2. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) welcomed the fact that some of the concerns expressed in General Assembly resolution 53/226 on the financing of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) had been addressed, particularly in regard to expediting the process of improving the working conditions of the local staff in the Force. The Department of Peace-keeping Operations and the Office of Human Resources Management should nevertheless devote more attention to important outstanding issues with a view to achieving parity between local and international staff. Bearing in mind, for instance, that the provision of good working conditions was central to the success of UNDOF, he failed to understand why local staff were excluded from the hardship allowance received by international staff, particularly when they both enjoyed the same privileges and immunities. Moreover, the fact that the mission was considered to be in a high-risk area had not been taken into consideration.

3. Numerous pieces of administrative and logistical equipment still required upgrading and only one break facility had been provided for all local staff. The offices had not yet been air-conditioned, despite the approaching summer heat. He also failed to understand why local staff had internal e-mail access only, particularly since the Syrian Arab Republic was connected to the Internet, the use of which was encouraged by the United Nations.

4. General Assembly resolution 53/226 requested the continuation of efforts to employ local staff for the Force against General Service posts. He noted, however, that a conversion of General Service staff posts into local staff posts had yet again been deemed impossible for operational reasons, despite the requirement stated in the Secretary-General's report on UNDOF (A/54/732) for a new General Service post. As for temporary duty assignment, the fact that local staff did not often benefit from it should be taken into account when they applied for such assignment, bearing in mind the principle of mobility, which was a major aspect of the work of United Nations staff. Finally, he requested the same entitlements, without distinction, for local staff as for staff of other missions.

5. **Mr. Wharton** (United States of America) said that, while the United States strongly supported the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which was implementing a difficult but important mandate, the use of funding resolutions of the General Assembly to pursue claims against a Member State was not procedurally correct. The United States had therefore voted against Assembly resolutions 53/227, 52/237 and 51/233, since they provided that Israel should pay costs stemming from the Qana incident. Those resolutions had not been adopted by consensus.

6. The procedure that had long been followed was for the Secretary-General to present and pursue the settlement of the Organization's claims against a State or States. Using a funding resolution to legislate a settlement was inappropriate and should be avoided. His delegation would work in good faith to find a compromise that would neither set an undesirable precedent nor politicize the important technical tasks which had been assigned to the Fifth Committee. It

could not, however, accept any amendments that referred to the Qana incident and the assessment of costs to Israel under the terms of General Assembly resolutions which the United States had opposed in the past.

7. **Mr. Adam** (Israel) noted that once again two delegations were engaged in the annual ritual of using the general debate on a peacekeeping operation to carry out a political attack. His delegation refused to be drawn into a political discussion, but wished to clarify the circumstances under which the unfortunate incident had occurred at Qana.

8. A Hizbullah terrorist organization had deliberately set up its ammunition base some 300 metres from the United Nations camp at Qana in order to draw fire towards Lebanese civilians living in the camp and possibly inflict damage on the property of UNIFIL. Israel had officially warned the United Nations of that dangerous situation but had failed to secure the removal of the Hizbullah base. After fortifying themselves in the base, Hizbullah members had fired dozens of Katyusha rockets on towns and villages in northern Israel, which, as was the right of all sovereign States, could not and would not tolerate bombs falling on its territory and stand by while its people were being killed. After three consecutive days of Hizbullah bombing from the base and numerous warnings from Israel, including by Prime Minister Peres himself, the Israel Defence Forces had been forced to put a stop to the firing and root out its source, namely the Hizbullah base.

9. He wished to reiterate that Israel had not been aware of the presence of Lebanese civilians within the compound of the United Nations camp at Qana and deeply regretted the loss of innocent life that had resulted, accidentally, from the crossfire which Hizbullah had started and for which it bore full responsibility. United Nations peacekeeping operations had incurred damage everywhere they had been deployed as a result of armed conflict between States and parties. That was the risk that Member States took upon themselves by sending soldiers, policemen and civilians and by building bases and camps for the forces.

10. The decision to make Israel alone liable for the cost of the damage resulting from the Qana incident was a one-sided political initiative by the General Assembly of a kind never previously directed against any other Member State involved in a conflict in which peacekeeping forces were deployed.

11. With regard to current developments, Israel had decided to withdraw its forces from Lebanon by July 2000, ideally within the framework of a peace agreement with the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon, which it had been actively seeking. Thus far, its efforts had not been reciprocated. In any event, the withdrawal was officially set to take place and the Foreign Minister of Israel had officially informed the United Nations that Israel's withdrawal was in full accordance with Security Council resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978). Israel intended to cooperate fully with the United Nations in the implementation of its decisions and would do its utmost to assist the Organization in the performance of the other tasks encompassed by the above-mentioned resolutions, including the restoration of international peace and security.

12. **Mr. Hassan** (Nigeria), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, supported the mandate of UNIFIL and the draft resolution on the financing of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon with the amendments that had been proposed. The Group of 77 and China were deeply concerned that the Committee was forced yet again to adopt provisions similar to those it had adopted for the past three years. The Secretary-General should take the necessary measures to ensure the implementation of the previous General Assembly resolutions and report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-fifth session.

13. **Mr. Diab** (Lebanon) said it was sad to note that Israel had been ready to spend millions of dollars to violate the sanctity of a United Nations post and to kill more than 100 Lebanese civilians, the majority of whom were women, children and the elderly, while it now refused to pay the amount which the General Assembly had mandated in resolutions 51/233, 52/237 and 53/227.

14. Israel had again chosen to draw the Committee into a political debate which was not within its mandate, but the bottom line was that the financial burden which the members of the Committee had collectively borne for each of the previous 22 years had been created by the Israeli occupation of Lebanon and by that State's refusal to implement Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which called upon Israel to withdraw completely and unconditionally from Lebanon to the internationally recognized borders.

15. The mandate of UNIFIL was to confirm the withdrawal of Israeli forces, to restore international peace and security and to assist the Government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its effective authority in the area of operations. Israel's refusal to withdraw from Lebanon, however, had prevented UNIFIL from implementing any part of that mandate and, as a result, the Force's task had been reduced to simply ensuring the peaceful character of its area of operations or, more precisely, of that part of the area which was not under Israeli occupation. In doing so, UNIFIL also afforded a measure of protection to the civilian population.

16. While Lebanon was firmly committed to the principle of collective responsibility, a precedent should not be created whereby a State could commit aggression against an active United Nations duty station, obstruct its mission and kill civilians seeking refuge there and then have Member States assume the costs of the damage. Lebanon's position was that the aggressor State should assume full responsibility for its acts of aggression, especially since that aggression had been deliberate and directed against the United Nations.

17. The fact that Israel was ignoring General Assembly resolutions was a clear indication of its persistence in politicizing the issue and should not go unpunished. The very credibility of the United Nations and of the Fifth Committee in particular required that General Assembly resolutions be implemented.

18. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he associated himself with the statement of the Lebanese representative. Israel had attempted in vain to justify its attack on the headquarters of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) on each occasion that it was discussed in the Committee. In persistently disregarding the will of the international community, Israel provided further evidence of its systematic policy of practising international terrorism, which, in 1996, had affected not only Lebanese Arab citizens, but also the entire international community represented in the UNIFIL presence. In view of its attack on that presence, Israel's claim that it supported peace-keeping operations was laughable, as was its claim to the right to defend itself anywhere in the world while denying that same right to the Lebanese in defence of their territory, dignity and people.

19. He was astounded that the Israeli troops had shelled the UNIFIL base in Qana when, according to the representative of Israel, they had been aware of a military presence near Qana. The Israeli aggression still continued unabated and shell attacks such as those which had occurred at daybreak on 4 and 5 May were frequent. If Israel was serious in its claims, it should implement fully and without condition the Security Council resolutions calling for its immediate withdrawal from southern Lebanon, as well as Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

20. **Mr. Adam** (Israel) said with regard to the current situation in Lebanon that Israel had decided to withdraw from Lebanon by July 2000 as part of a broader peace agreement. Even though its initiative had not been reciprocated by the other sides, his Government had officially informed the Secretary-General of its intention. Its withdrawal would be in full accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and Israel would fully cooperate with the United Nations on the ground as well as in the other tasks of the Organization, including the restoration of international peace and security. He hoped that, instead of the annual ritual of the current debate, the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon would sit down with Israel at the negotiating table to seriously consider the proposals that had been made for peace in the region.

21. **Mr. Diab** (Lebanon), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that Israel could avoid engaging the Committee in political discussions that were beyond its remit by paying the amounts which it owed. The Arab countries had expressed their firm support for Lebanon and its request for Israel to implement fully Security Council resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978) with a view to the full and unconditional Israeli withdrawal from Lebanese territory to behind the recognized international borders, which was a prerequisite for the success of the peace process. They had also affirmed the right of Lebanon to compensation for the enormous damage inflicted on its people and the infrastructure as a result of the repeated Israeli attacks against it.

22. He stressed that the United Nations should assume its responsibilities in connection with those two resolutions by ensuring that UNIFIL fulfilled its security functions. Israel would then have no pretext for holding Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic responsible for any security incident that might threaten security, peace and stability in the region.

23. The words of the Israeli Prime Minister concerning respect for Lebanese airspace failed to ring true, preceded as they were by the firing of Israeli missiles on civilians, including women and children, in Lebanese villages. As in the case of the massacres in Qana and elsewhere, such action had then been described as a mistake, a word which applied to the whole of Israel's history with Lebanon.

24. Having emphasized the need for caution and for the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), he stated his country's refusal to perform the role of guarding the Israeli borders and called on Israel to enter into a just and comprehensive agreement that would guarantee peace for all the countries in the region.

25. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that it was not the first claim of withdrawal from southern Lebanon to be made by Israel; in 1999, it had made an identical claim, but nothing had changed since. The international community was therefore unable to credit such claims unless they were supported by action. He was extremely surprised by the Israeli representative's statement that his country wished to achieve peace, as if the mere declaration of a wish would bring about peace without fulfilment of the necessary conditions and requirements stipulated in Security Council resolutions 338 (1973) and 242 (1968), and in the Madrid terms of reference. Only when those conditions and requirements were fulfilled would Israel's words be taken seriously.

26. **Mr. Persaud** (Field Administration and Logistics Division, Department of Peacekeeping Operations), replying to the questions posed by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, said that conditions of service and local staff were the subject of an ongoing dialogue within the UNDOF staff-management committee and had already resulted in many improvements. With regard to air conditioning, the electrical facilities needed to be upgraded in order to accommodate the additional power load. Some of the work had been completed; work on the remaining buildings, which housed both international and local staff, including military staff, would be completed by mid-June. The mission's communication facilities also had to be upgraded in order to provide internal e-mail to local and international staff. All staff members were expected to have international e-mail services by some time in July.

27. The replacement of international civil servants by local staff in UNDOF was not practical in view of the functions that had to be carried out. Efforts were being made to reassign local staff to other peacekeeping missions without disrupting the activities of the releasing missions.

28. On the basis of a Fifth Committee decision, his department had requested the Office of Human Resources Management to consult the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) concerning additional hardship allowances for local staff transferred from Damascus. Technically, hardship allowances were approved for certain types of appointments and granted only to expatriates; however, the issue would be addressed in the coming months.

Agenda item 133: Financing of the United Nations Protection Force, the United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia, the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force and the United Nations Peace Forces headquarters *(continued)* (A/54/803)

29. **Mr. Garnier** (France) wondered whether the figure of $138.5 million for reimbursement of contingent-owned equipment (A/54/803, para. 34) took into account all requests for reimbursement and for compensation of losses amounting to $44 million. In section VI.B, it was difficult to compare the total requirements set out in table 7, which were broken down by methodology, with the total resources given in table 8, which were broken down by item. In its report on the implementation of the reformed procedures for determining reimbursement to Member States for contingent-owned equipment (A/53/944, para. 19), the Advisory Committee had recommended that, in reports on the liquidation of peacekeeping operations, sufficient data should be made available so as to allow a determination of the impact of the retroactive application of the new contingent-owned equipment arrangements. Since the report on the United Nations Protection Force did not contain sufficient data, those recommendations, endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 54/19 (para. 6), had not been fully implemented.

Agenda item 121: Programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 *(continued)*

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/54/L.83/Rev.1 concerning agenda items 49 (b) and 121 (A/C.5/54/60)

30. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee had considered the statement of the Secretary-General contained in document A/C.5/54/60 on the programme budget implications of the draft resolution contained in document A/C.5/L.83/Rev.1. Under the terms of the draft resolution, the structure and composition of the Millennium Summit and the composition and modalities of the four interactive round tables to be held in concurrence with the plenary meetings would be established in accordance with the procedures set forth in the annex to the draft resolution.

31. The assumptions were that the four round tables would be held consecutively but in concurrence with the plenary meetings, that the round tables would have at least 40 seats and would be chaired by a Head of State, that interpretation would be provided in all the official languages of the Organization and that all the round table meetings would be held in the Economic and Social Council Chamber. The estimated requirements for the Department of Public Information would be in the range of $544,600 to $731,200 and for the Office of Central Support Services in the range of $567,300 to $670,400. Those amounts would be in addition to the $450,000 required for security coverage and $191,600 for protocol. The related provisions would be reflected in the first performance report on the programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001.

32. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee had been informed that the total requirements for the Millennium Assembly, as set out in document A/C.5/54/60, together with the amounts indicated under sections 1, Overall policy-making, direction and coordination, and 26, Public information, of the programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (A/54/6/Rev.1), amounted to $2,950,000.

33. The Advisory Committee had been informed that the reason for the indication of a range of requirements had been that two main elements remained to be decided at the intergovernmental level, namely, whether the round tables would be held as open or closed meetings and how extensive the reconfiguration of the Economic and Social Council Chamber would need to be. The Committee had been informed that two options were being considered to improve sight lines in the Chamber: a relatively simple option, which would entail costs of approximately $6,000, and a more extensive reconfiguration, involving the construction of a platform in the Chamber, which would entail costs of $110,000.

34. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee had been informed that there were no plans for selling television coverage of the Millennium Assembly to the media. The Committee recommended that consideration should be given to charging a user fee to private sector media.

35. The Advisory Committee had also enquired as to whether the arrangements for the Assembly would result in any permanent upgrades to the facilities at Headquarters and had been informed that the only permanent upgrade that had been envisaged was the acquisition of a wireless local area network. In the Advisory Committee's opinion, such important events as the Millennium Assembly presented an opportunity to upgrade facilities and the Committee therefore recommended that efforts should be made to maximize long-term benefits to the Organization.

36. The Advisory Committee wished to point out that there was no precedent for the use of ranges of requirements in statements of programme budget implications and that that practice eroded the meaning of the exercise. It understood, however, that some of the uncertainties regarding requirements had to do with intergovernmental decisions over which the Secretariat had no control. Bearing that fact and its other comments and observations in mind, the Advisory Committee recommended that the Fifth Committee should inform the General Assembly that the adoption of the draft resolution contained in document A/54/L.83/Rev.1 would give rise to an estimated requirement under the programme budget for the biennium 2000-2002 not exceeding $1,401,600. Where necessary, such appropriation would be subject to the use and operation of the contingency fund.

37. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America), after endorsing the Advisory Committee's views expressed concern at the range of the expenditures requested (A/C.5/54/60, para. 12). Indeed, the Millennium Summit was not supposed to give rise to any programme budget implications, since the assumption

was that the additional costs could be absorbed by the regular budgets of the Department of Public Information and the Office of Central Support Services. He questioned the practicality of spending $110,000 for a temporary reconfiguration of the Economic and Social Council Chamber (A/C.5/54/60, para. 10 (f)), which had presumably been selected because it was well-suited to a round-table discussion, and would appreciate more information on the $90,000 required for set-up and furnishing of bilateral rooms (para.10 (g)). He requested clarification of the need for $30,000 for special provisions for the press (para.10 (e)) and $80,000 to set up a tent to accommodate spillover media (para. 10 (j)). The figure of $422,300 for television coverage (para. 11 (a)) seemed excessive for an event that would probably attract the media anyway. He had similar feelings about the expenses for radio and photo coverage (paras. 11 (b) and 11 (c)). Lastly, he would appreciate details on the three-day live webcast coverage mentioned in paragraph 11 (f), which seemed to involve nothing more than setting up a camera, and a breakdown of the temporary assistance required for the information centres (para. 11 (g)).

38. **Ms. Buergo Rodríguez** (Cuba) expressed her delegation's support for the organization of the Millennium Summit, whose planning would have been facilitated by earlier submission of the programme budget implications. She wondered whether conference services for the consultations referred to in paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 54/254 entitled "Millennium Summit of the United Nations" were included in section II of the programme budget implications and how the Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division envisaged the procedure for charging additional costs against the contingency fund in the context of the first performance report (A/C.5/54/60, para. 12). She also requested a breakdown of the proposed cost of security services for the event. Lastly, she wondered about the possible negative impact of reductions in the temporary assistance and general operating expenses of the Department of Public Information within the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium.

39. **Mr. Darwish** (Egypt) said that the figure in paragraph 9 (c) of the Arabic version of the Secretary-General's statement (A/C.5/54/60) must be corrected. He agreed with the representative of the United States that rather than incurring expenses for media coverage of the Summit, the Department of Public Information should be selling broadcasting rights to media companies (paras. 11 (a) and 11 (b)). It did not seem necessary to spend $90,000 on set-up and furnishing of bilateral rooms (para. 10 (g)), when the Heads of State and Ministers for Foreign Affairs who would be participating and had participated in the General Assembly every year had always found the existing chambers and conference rooms to be perfectly satisfactory.

40. **Mr. Orr** (Canada), speaking on behalf of Australia, Canada and New Zealand, said that there seemed to be strong support for organizing the Millennium Summit but not much willingness to invest large sums of money in it. The event should not be used to seek appropriations that had been denied during the regular budget approval process. It had been the understanding of Australia, Canada and New Zealand that the expenses for the Summit could be absorbed by the regular budget, and they had difficulty with the additional costs now being submitted. In fact, it was not clear why the draft resolution, which was very precise (and made no mention of the film festival referred to in para. 11 (a)), had programme budget implications.

41. When resolution 54/254 had been adopted, his delegation had proposed that any additional requirements should be considered in the context of the first performance report during the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. The Secretariat was urged to find ways and means of reducing the projected expenditures, which seemed perplexing, particularly the $422,300 and $70,300 for television and photo coverage, respectively (paras. 11 (a) and 11 (c)). Those expenses seemed particularly unnecessary in the light of the press and media coverage requirements set out in paragraphs 10 (e), 10 (j) and 11 (d). The Organization should clarify its role and that of the media in covering the event with a view to avoiding duplication. The additional costs set out in paragraphs 10 (a), 10 (b), 10 (c) and 10 (h) should be met by pooling resources in the Secretariat or using already existing facilities. In conclusion, Australia, Canada and New Zealand felt that the reconfiguration of the Economic and Social Council Chamber was unnecessary.

42. **Mr. Bouhadou** (Algeria) said that his delegation was unsure as to the need for and the timeliness of allocating additional resources, as requested by the Secretariat, and was concerned about the belated consideration of the programme budget implications.

43. **Mr. Park Hae-yun** (Republic of Korea) said that, when the regular budget had been discussed, such a large request for additional expenditure had not been expected. Further clarification should be provided regarding the amounts requested for bilateral rooms, media spillover facilities and television coverage (A/C.5/54/60, paras. 10 and 11). Additional expenditure should be kept to a minimum, particularly for the reconfiguration of the Economic and Social Council Chamber. His delegation felt that conference services for the Millennium Summit should be provided within the normal conference facilities for the Assembly.

44. **Ms. Achouri** (Tunisia) recalled that it had been agreed by consensus that media coverage of the Millennium Summit should be at the highest possible level. The Committee should also bear in mind that there was some information that the Secretariat was not yet able to provide, because certain detailed decisions still remained to be made and the size of the delegations which would accompany Heads of State and Government was not yet known. The consultations on the Summit were bogged down. Since time was short, every effort should be made to finalize the remaining details.

45. **Mr. Adam** (Israel) said that although the subjects to be discussed at the Millennium Summit were of crucial importance, the additional amounts requested were considerable and could be better used for important items such as economic development in Africa. Also, the renovation of United Nations Headquarters should be dealt with under the appropriate programme budget section. The Committee should not approve the amounts currently being requested; the Secretariat should be asked to prepare a new proposal with a much lower range of costs.

46. **Mr. Powles** (New Zealand) said it had been clearly agreed during the consultations that there was a need for urgency in taking such relatively simple decisions relating to the operation of the Millennium Summit. Furthermore, the offices of heads of State and Government were now asking the Organization how they could make firm decisions regarding attendance at the Summit when precise decisions on organizational questions still had not been made. He urged the Committee to avoid any further delay.

47. **Mr. Sach** (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that, when the holding of a Millennium Assembly had been discussed in 1997 and 1998, it had been suggested that the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly would be renamed as the Millennium Assembly, and it was in that context that it had been thought that there would be no additional cost. The situation had since changed, with particular arrangements for the Millennium Summit being put in place through consultations among Member States, and it was because of those changes that the financial implications were only now becoming clear. Insofar as it had been possible to predict costs, they had been reflected in the programme budget proposals for 2000-2001, but no details had been available at that time as to the particular arrangements that would be agreed for the Millennium Assembly. Much more specific information was now available, although it was still incomplete, which was why the current estimate contained a range of possible costs. For example, the issue of whether the round-table sessions were to be open or closed would make a considerable difference to their cost.

48. Some delegations had said that the expected overall cost of the Millennium Summit was excessive in general terms. However, it should be borne in mind that the overall cost of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations had been between $8 and $9 million, whereas the cost of the Millennium Summit would not exceed $3 million, including both the initial appropriations for 2000-2001 and the additional requirements currently before the Committee. The size of the request was relatively modest given the necessity of providing appropriate coverage to an event which would be attended by numerous heads of State and Government.

49. Although some delegations had suggested that the costs involved in the Millennium Summit should be absorbed by the regular budget, the latter's absorptive capacity was currently at a very low level, following a number of years of fixed budgets, the absorption of many additional costs and considerable reductions in posts and in contractual servicing provisions. In-built capacity was currently at a much lower level than it had been at the time of the fiftieth anniversary celebrations. The General Assembly had recently made an across-the-board cut of $4.7 million in the central services budget, without identifying any particular programmes to be reduced. That budget was crucial for the provision of services for the Millennium Assembly in terms of facilities management, information

technology, telephones, local area networks and basic technical support. A similar cut had been made in the budget of the Department of Public Information. There was therefore no reserve of resources which could be drawn upon to absorb the cost of the Summit. The only area in which no request for additional resources was being made was that relating to conference servicing, including documentation, interpretation and other language services.

50. Detailed questions had been asked on the estimated additional requirements listed in paragraphs 10 and 11 of the statement (A/C.5/54/60). He noted that the members of the press covering the Millennium Summit would need to make a considerable number of connections in a very short period; that was the reason for the amount estimated in paragraph 10 (a) for the installation of additional telephone and facsimile lines and rental of facsimile equipment. Most of the additional lines would be provided in Conference Room 1, which would be the main press centre for the Millennium Assembly, but some would also be provided in the tent for spillover media requirements mentioned in paragraph 10 (j). It would be most unfortunate, and embarrassing for the Organization, if the accommodation provided for the press proved to be inadequate. The requirement mentioned in paragraph 10 (b) was based on the experience gained from the fiftieth anniversary celebrations, in terms of the need to provide appropriate support to the high-level dignitaries and participants in relation to photocopying, cellular telephones and personal computers. As for paragraph 10 (c), there was no local area network (LAN) available for the number of personal computers which would be needed by the press and others in the conference building; the LAN installation would be retained after the Summit and would represent a value added for the Organization. Consideration had been given to a temporary installation, but in the light of the costs involved it had been decided that a full installation was the better option. The amount given in paragraph 10 (d) reflected the fact that it would be necessary to hire temporary technicians and other staff to set up conference facilities during the holiday weekend immediately prior to the Millennium Summit. The amount shown in paragraph 10 (e) was for electronic connections and ISDN lines for personal computers used by the press.

51. The budgetary requirement for reconfiguration of the Economic and Social Council Chamber to accommodate the round-table sessions, as mentioned in paragraph 10 (f), would depend on which option Member States chose. The least expensive option would cost only $6,000 but would involve line-of-sight problems for some delegations; the most expensive, costed at $110,000, would entail more elaborate construction work, but it would solve the line-of-sight problem and enable two advisers to be seated for each participating delegation.

52. As for the amount in paragraph 10 (g) for set-up and furnishing of bilateral rooms, the additional requirement was due to the fact that 28 such rooms would be required, whereas the usual number for a regular session of the General Assembly was 15.

53. With respect to requirements for television coverage (para. 11 (a)), the exact figure would depend on whether the round tables were to be open or closed to the public; if they were closed, the requirements would be less, since television coverage would be provided for plenary meetings only. The estimates in document A/C.5/54/60 had been prepared on the assumption that both plenary meetings and round tables would receive coverage. The costs included salaries and overtime for television directors and other personnel, equipment and transmission costs. The costs of television coverage would be shared between broadcasters and the Organization. With respect to the question of generating income by requiring broadcasters to pay for television and radio feeds, that practice had been discontinued a few years earlier. Starting in the 1950s, local broadcasters in New York had contributed to the costs of television coverage; however, as the Organization's membership had expanded and interest in the United Nations had become universal, the Department had found that broadcasters in some Member States did not have the means to pay for television and radio feeds and that it could obtain wider coverage of the Organization's activities by doing without the relatively modest income generated in that manner.

54. The amount of $34,800 for radio coverage had also been estimated on the assumption that both round tables and plenary meetings would be covered, and included $12,400 for the salaries of eight radio engineers, plus the cost of renting equipment and transmission lines (para. 11 (b)).

55. **Mr. Lone** (Department of Public Information) said that he sympathized with delegations' concerns

about the costs of media coverage of the Millennium Summit and that the whole Department was being mobilized for that event; every staff member not on essential duty in another area would be assigned to the Summit. The costs indicated in document A/C.5/54/60 were for technical expertise and equipment. The Department had made every effort to absorb the costs of covering the event. For example, $1.7 million in regular budget resources had been redeployed for the live radio broadcast project.

56. The Department faced the unprecedented challenge of ensuring that a massive global audience could see the level of confidence enjoyed by the Organization and the manner in which the latter was dealing with key issues. The suggestion that television networks should be allowed to cover the event directly did not take into account the need for balanced, objective coverage of all the events at the Summit, which his Department was best able to provide, or the problems of security and space which that alternative would entail. The Department would be the hub for the distribution of all coverage and would provide every delegation with live video for use in its home country. The sale of such coverage would represent a break from past practice and could hurt media relations; that ran counter to the Department's mandate of maximizing the coverage of United Nations activities. In any case, the income generated would be minimal.

57. The costs of the webcast referred to in paragraph 11 (f) included the cost of setting up six Web sites, one in each of the official languages, which the Department could not do on its own. Although the provider would not charge the Organization for its services, each line would cost $15,000. With respect to the question of placing an outside provider in charge of photo coverage, the group photograph for the Organization's fiftieth anniversary had been the responsibility of the Eastman Kodak Company, which had allowed the Organization first-use rights to the photograph; subsequently, however, the copyright had reverted to Kodak, and the Organization could no longer use the photograph as it saw fit. That situation was unacceptable. The use of giant high-definition television (HDTV) screens would be a dramatic innovation that would show that the United Nations was committed to keeping up with the latest technology. The HDTV equipment would be provided free of charge, but the associated costs would amount to some $25,000.

58. **Mr. Sach** (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/54/L.83/Rev.1 would be reflected as charges against the contingency fund, in line with the procedures established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 41/213. The estimate of $450,000 for security coverage included the cost of 20 security officers from United Nations offices away from Headquarters, plus 16 officers hired locally on short-term contracts, for a total of 36 extra security officers. That amount also included the cost of equipment such as X-ray and monitoring equipment, uniforms, two-way radios and cellular telephones. The total of $450,000 reflected an estimated $261,000 for staff costs and $189,000 for equipment costs. Lastly, the cost of conference services for informal consultations held concurrently with the Millennium Assembly, like those of conference services for the Assembly itself, would be absorbed from within the current appropriation for the biennium 2000-2001.

59. **Mr. Darwish** (Egypt) asked whether the Department of Public Information could ascertain whether major networks, which would certainly be interested in covering an event as important as the Millennium Summit, would be willing to pay for such coverage.

60. **Mr. Zhou Qiangwu** (China) said that the Millennium Summit was fast approaching and that preparations for that event were important for its success. The Member States should make the appropriate arrangements as soon as possible to speed up those preparations and ensure the success of the Summit.

61. **Ms. Buergo Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that, in taking a decision, the Fifth Committee should bear in mind the importance of expediting the preparations for the Millennium Summit and the fact that its decision would affect the preparations to be made by each Member State. She asked the Secretariat to confirm that the conference servicing requirements for the informal consultations leading up to the Millennium Summit would be met from within existing resources and to provide written information on the costs of security coverage, particularly with regard to the number of security officers to be assigned to protect heads of State. With respect to the proposal that some security officers should be hired locally, she felt that all of the 36 extra security officers should be provided from within the ranks of the Organization.

62. Delegations should not be surprised that the Secretariat had issued a statement of programme budget implications, since that was the usual procedure whenever additional activities were authorized and the related expenditures were to be charged against the contingency fund. She asked the Secretariat to confirm whether those amounts would be charged against the contingency fund in the context of the first performance report, as indicated in document A/C.5/54/60. Her delegation trusted that the Committee would take a decision soon, and it hoped that the decision would reaffirm the importance of the budget process established pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 41/213 and 42/211. It was not the Committee's usual procedure to require that costs such as those outlined in document A/C.5/54/60 should be absorbed within the current level of the budget. Those additional requirements illustrated the impact which the reductions approved for the biennium 2000-2001 had had on specific budget sections.

63. **Ms. Archini** (Italy) said that she shared the concerns expressed regarding the reconfiguration of the Economic and Social Council Chamber, especially since her Government had contributed to the recent refurbishment of that chamber. She hoped that those efforts had not been wasted. Since it appeared that draft resolution A/54/L.83/Rev.1 would be adjusted and that a second revision would be issued, she asked whether the Committee would receive another statement of programme budget implications or whether the changes made would not entail an increase in costs.

64. **Mr. Adam** (Israel) asked whether there were any projections of the probable number of viewers of the television broadcasts and whether any national television stations intended to carry live broadcasts of the Millennium Summit in its entirety.

65. **Mr. Sach** (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that a new statement of programme budget implications would be issued only if the changes made to draft resolution A/54/L.83/Rev.1 affected the cost estimates. The first performance report for the biennium 2000-2001 would show changes in requirements under each section as a result of variations in rates of exchange and inflation, decisions of policy-making organs and other factors; the additional costs for the Millennium Summit would be classified as changes resulting from decisions of policy-making organs, and revised appropriations for the biennium would be proposed accordingly. Another document would tabulate the various charges against the contingency fund, and the Fifth Committee would report to the General Assembly on all the changes to the budget.

66. With respect to the generation of income from broadcasters, he had already referred to the problems caused by the imposition of compulsory charges on all broadcasters and felt that it would be best to retain the Organization's current policy. However, the Department of Public Information could hold discussions with major broadcasters to see whether they would be willing to make voluntary contributions towards the costs of media coverage of the Millennium Summit. Care must be taken to avoid any action that might diminish coverage of the event.

67. **Mr. Lone** (Department of Public Information) said that there were no projections of the number of viewers of the Millennium Summit. However, broadcasters around the world had shown great interest in the Secretary-General's report to the Millennium Assembly (A/54/2000). The European Broadcasting Union had carried live coverage of the Secretary-General's statement before the General Assembly and of the ensuing press conference, and many other networks and stations had broadcast that coverage as well. However, it would be difficult to broadcast the entire Millennium Summit live, owing to differences in time zones and to the difficulty of disrupting other programming. His Department was working with broadcasters to ensure that all television viewers and radio listeners could see and hear at least the part of the Summit that concerned their region or country.

68. **Mr. Powles** (New Zealand) said that the President of the General Assembly did not intend to produce a second revision of draft resolution A/54/L.83/Rev.1. Any minor changes would be made orally in the plenary Assembly.

69. *The meeting was suspended at 12.50 p.m. and resumed at 1.10 p.m.*

70. **The Chairman** said that the President of the General Assembly had indicated that the failure of the Committee to take a prompt decision on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/54/L.83/Rev.1 would create serious problems for the President's work concerning the Millennium Assembly. She therefore trusted that the Committee would be in a position to adopt a decision the following morning.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.